



AT THE
C O U R T
AT
W H I T E - H A L L,

March 18th, 168⁸.

Present,

<i>The KING's Most Excellent Majesty.</i>	<i>Earl of Craven.</i>
<i>His Royal Highness Prince GEORGE of Denmark.</i>	<i>Earl of Berkley.</i>
<i>Lord Chancellor.</i>	<i>Earl of Rochester.</i>
<i>Lord President.</i>	<i>Earl of Morray.</i>
<i>Lord Privy-Seal.</i>	<i>Earl of Middleton.</i>
<i>Marquis of Powis.</i>	<i>Earl of Melfort.</i>
<i>Lord Chamberlain.</i>	<i>Lord Vicount Preston.</i>
<i>Earl of Peterborough.</i>	<i>Lord Bishop of Durham.</i>
<i>Earl of Huntington.</i>	<i>Lord Godolphin.</i>
<i>Earl of Bath.</i>	<i>Lord Dover.</i>
	<i>Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer.</i>
	<i>Lord Chief Justice Herbert.</i>

WHEREAS the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of *L O N D O N*, did this Day Present to the **BOARD** a Report on the Petitions of the Free Fishermen, and the Trading Fishmongers, which was read in the Words following:

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May it please Your Majesty,

Whereas the Free Fishermen Eastward of *London-Bridge*, did lately Petition Your MAJESTY against the Practices of the Fishmongers of *London*, in their engrossing of Fish before it comes to the Market, in those places from whence the said Fishermen did use to bring the same; Complaining also of their Fore-stalling the Market, and selling Fish at *Billings-gate* before the Hour limited for beginning of the Market there: And a Petition likewise being Presented to Your Majesty from the Trading Fishmongers of *London*, against the Fishermen of *Barking* and *Greenwich*, for Fishing with unlawful Nets, and destroying the Brood of Fish, whereby the said Fishmongers are forced (as they alleadge) to send an hundred Miles by Land for Fish; Your Majesty was pleased by Order of Council, the 14th Day of *January* last, to order Us the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of *London*, to take care that the Abuses mentioned in the said Fishmongers Petition might be reformed, and the Offenders punished, and also to enquire into the Matter complained of by the said Fishermen, and to Report the state of it with our Opinions, what may fully be done in order to regulate the Abuses complained of.

Now We do humbly certify Your MAJESTY, That We have called before Us all the said Parties, both the Fishermen and Fishmongers, and heard them by their Counsel several times in reference to the Matters suggested in their said Petitions; and we have examined divers Witnesses by them severally produced touching their respective Complaints,

plaints , and upon the whole Matter We find as followeth :

That the said Fishermen did heretofore employ themselves chiefly in catching of Fish ; But of later years the Employment of most of them hath been (except in *Whiting* Season) to go down and buy Fish of the Fishermen of *Rye*, *Foulston*, and other places on the Coast and in the Mouth of the River of *Thames* , and bring the same up to *Billingsgate-Market* to be sold.

That the Fish taken by the said Fishermen of *Rye*, *Foulston*, *Hastings*, and other places on the Coasts, hath anciently been brought up to *London* on Horseback by *Rippiers*, of which *Rippiers* there are at present two sorts, the one buying Fish of the said Fishermen at the Sea-Coasts, and bringing the same up to the Market to sell on their own account, and the other being only in the nature of Servants or Carriers to the Fishmongers of *London*.

We further find, That there were anciently not only Purveyors in those places for Your Majesties Predecessors, and divers great Lords, but also for the Fishmongers of *London*, which Practice the said Fishmongers still continue, and their Purveyors are called *Hosts*, and reside in or near those places, daily buying great quantities of Fish there for the Fishmongers account, and sending it up to them by the second sort of *Rippiers* before-named. And in particular, the said Fishermen did charge and prove *Ferris* and *Cox*, two of the said *London* Fishmongers, to have remained several Months at *Rye*, and there to have bought up great quantities of Fish themselves, which they sent up to *London* by *Rippiers*, as aforesaid.

We further humbly certify, That the Particulars

culars following are all the Proofs we could get against any of the said Fishmongers for engrossing; that is to say, We had the Testimony of Captain *Taylor*, Commander of the *King's Fisher*, That he in the Year 1684. being sent by King *CHARLES* the Second of Blessed Memory to *Plymouth*, to buy *Lobsters* for His Majesties Table, the Fishermen of those Parts did at first refuse to sell him any, telling him, The Fishmongers of *London* had bought all they should catch, at Three Shillings per Dozen, and that they could not sell to any other; but afterwards upon producing his Orders they did furnish him with *Lobsters*; and one *Beatrice* did testifie also much to the same purpose. It did likewise appear to Us, That one . . . *Walton*, a Fishmonger of *London*, hath (by what means we know not) well nigh the whole Trade for *Carps*, *Pikes* and *Eels*, and does also Import Foreign Fish by virtue of a Licence from Your Majesty, for the supply of Your Majesties Table and Household. And it was also made out before Us, That Three of the said *London* Fishmongers, namely *Utbert*, *Price*, and *Peacock*, do frequently at *Billingsgate* take up Fish brought thither, not agreeing upon any Price for the same, and then distribute the said Fish to other Fishmongers; and after tis sold, then they Pay the Persons who brought the same to Market at what Rates the said Fishmongers please; and the same (as we are informed) is generally used and practised by the rest of the Fishmongers. And we find also, That the Fishmongers do not only buy, but frequently sell Fish likewise at *Billingsgate*, and both before the Hours appointed for the beginning of the Market by the Laws of this City.

And

And We further humbly certifie, That an Ancient Fish-Market at *Queenhithe* in *London* having been much decayed, the same was some years since, by the care and diligence of several French-Men (who settled themselves here at *London*, and caused Fish to be brought thither from several parts on the Coast, and there sold it at low and reasonable Prices) greatly restored, but is now fallen to decay again by the Practices of the Fishmongers, as We are informed by one of the said French-men, they on purpose to discourage the said French-men, bringing their Fish to the said Market, and there Selling it for the fourth part of what it cost them at the Sea-side, bearing the loss thereof by a general Purse and Contribution amongst themselves, as they themselves boasted in the said French-mans hearing: And another Course they took to ruine the said French-men in their undertaking, was by giving the Fisher-men excessive Rates for their Fish, double to what they gave before, that they might get the whole into their own hands.

In reference to that Part of the Fishermen's Petition where they suggest, That Your Majesty is upon occasion supplied from them with Sea-men, We humbly certifie, that it did appear to us, That they do breed many Able Sea-men; but that *Rye*, and the other Towns upon the Coast from whence the Fish comes, do by means thereof breed many more, and those in our humble Opinions more Able, because they continually endure all Weathers at all Seasons of the Year. And it was alledged to us on behalf of the said Coast-Towns, both by Witnesses produced *Viva voce*, and also by Depositions taken before the Magistrates there, and certified to Us, That they should not be able to

carry on the Fishing Trade in the said Towns, unless their Fish were conveyed to *London* by Land by *Rippiers*, as aforesaid, on Horseback, in regard of the uncertainty of Winds, and the quick decay of Fish.

We find also, That the Fishery hath been greatly prejudiced by the Fishermen of *Barking* and others, by fishing at unseasonable times, and using unlawful and unfizable Nets, and other unlawful Practices, to the destruction of the Fry; and particularly of late in the Bay of *Rye*.

In reference to the River of *Thames* and *Medway*, as far as the City is Intrusted by Your Majesty with the Conservacy, We have given strict Orders, That the good establishments formerly made for preservation of Fish therein, may as far as possible be observed and put in Execution. And we shall use our utmost endeavour, that Offenders against the same may be severely punished. And we make bold to represent our humble Opinions in obedience to your Majesty's Commands, That for reformation of the said Abuses in fishing at the Sea Coasts, All Your Majesties Officers and Ministers there may be streightly required to inspect and prevent the same, and bring Offenders to punishment.

And for the better preventing of Abuses in the buying and selling of Fish here in *London*, We have given Orders, That the ancient Rules prescribed for the Fish-Market in *London*, both as to the beginning thereof, and in other particulars, be punctually observed: And in Our humble Opinions it may be a good Means to prevent the like Abuses in other Parts, if the Laws against Engrossing and Fo restaling were duly and strictly put

put in Execution, and Offenders against them severely Punished.

And that for the better supply of the said Markets with Fish, all possible Encouragement may be given to all manner of Persons to bring Fish both by Land and Sea to the Publick Market, from any of the Coasts: And further, That all such Fish-Women and others as are qualified by Law, may by Your Majesties Justices of Peace, as well in *Middlesex* and *Westminster*, as *London*, be Licensed to retail Fish about the Streets, for which purpose Your Majesty (If it be your Royal Pleasure) may give Commands to the said Justices in *Middlesex* and *Westminster* to grant Licenses accordingly.

All which is humbly Certified and Submitted by Your Majesties most dutiful and obedient Subjects and Servants, The Lord MAYOR and Aldermen of Your City of *LONDON*.

By Order of the said Mayor and Aldermen.

17 March, 1684.

Wagstaffe.

HIS MAJESTY in Council is graciously pleased to Approve of the said Report, and doth hereby Order, that for the Reformation of the Abuses in Fishing on the Sea Coasts, the Justices of the Peace, and other His MAJESTIES Officers and Ministers therein concerned, do cause all Offenders to be proceeded against according to the Laws in that case Provided: And also, That the Laws against Engrossing and Forestalling the Markets, be duly and strictly put in Execution, by causing the Persons offending against them to be severely Punished; And that due Encouragement be given to all manner of Persons, who shall bring Fish by Land or Sea from any of the Coasts to the Publick Markets. And for the preventing of Abuses in Buying and Selling of Fish in London, that the ancient Rules prescribed for the Fish-Market in London be punctually observed.

And the Justices of the Peace of London, Middlesex and Westminster, are hereby Ordered to Licence from time to time such Persons as are qualified by Law to Retail Fish about the Streets. And lastly it is Ordered, That the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London, Do, as much as in them lies, cause the Directions hereby given, to be duly observed and kept by all Persons herein Concerned.

W. Bridgeman.